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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relationship between selected demographic characteristics and attitude toward sexual harassment. The study population consisted of high school students and adults enrolled in traditional and nontraditional training programs and teachers in 12 New Jersey school districts. Sixty-three percent (638) of the 1,020 questionnaires originally mailed to gender equity project directors were returned with usable data. Study participants were asked if they considered 10 different behaviors to be sexual harassment. Female respondents were more likely to consider the behaviors to be sexual harassment than were male respondents; however, both males and females felt that forms of sexual harassment in which job security, compensation, or work assignments were conditional on sexual favors were most offensive. Respondents aged 16-18 were consistently less likely to perceive behaviors as sexual harassment than were individuals aged 13-15 or over 18. Race also influenced perceptions of sexual harassment. Caucasians and Hispanics were most sensitive to sexual harassment. Students enrolled in traditional career preparation programs were significantly more likely to be sensitive to sexual harassment than those enrolled in nontraditional programs. (The survey data are displayed in 13 tables and the survey instrument is appended. Contains 24 references.) (MN)

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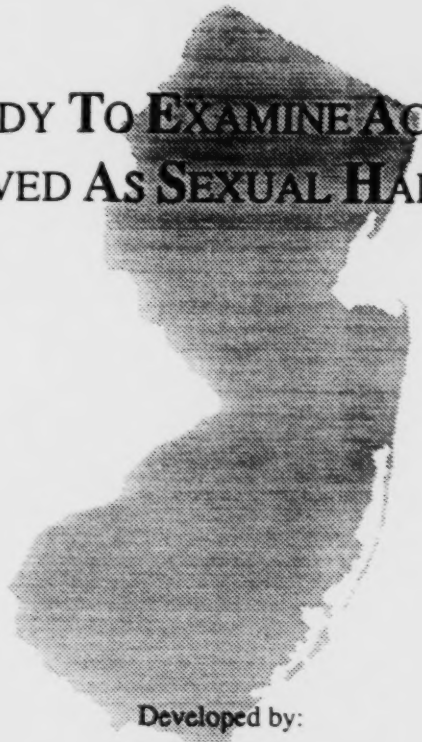
STUDY TO EXAMINE ACTIONS PERCEIVED AS SEXUAL HARASSMENT



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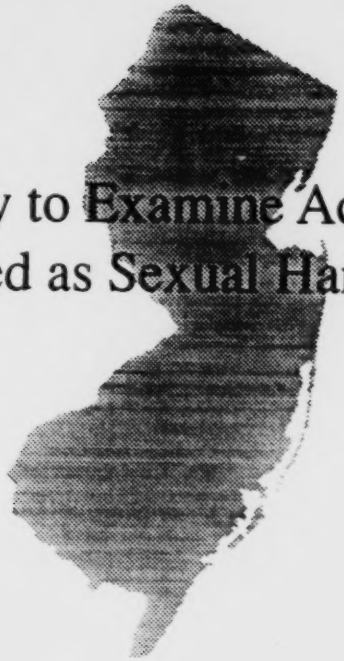

Study to Examine Actions Perceived as Sexual Harassment

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Funded through the Carl D. Perkins Act
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INTRODUCTION

Sexual Harassment has become a topic of general interest during the recent past. Following the Thomas-Hill Supreme Court confirmation hearing controversy it became apparent that people, in general, are not in agreement as to what types of behavior constitutes sexual harassment. In order to learn more about what people perceive to be sexual harassment a study was conducted during the 1991-92 academic year by the Montclair State College Life Skills Center. The research was sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Vocational Education. Fear of sexual harassment has been considered to be a deterrent to women entering vocations which have been considered to be male oriented. Because male oriented jobs have historically been better paying and of higher prestige, considerable attention has been given to preparing women for these jobs.

The purpose of this study was to examine attitudes toward sexual harassment by asking participants to indicate what kinds of actions they considered to be sexual harassment. Sexual harassment involves only activities which include touching for some people while others consider any impediment to their activities which is sexual in nature to be sexual harassment. Data was also collected on general interest in sexual harassment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is Sexual Harassment?

A wide range of definitions are found in the literature as to what constitutes sexual harassment. In general, sexual harassment can be considered to be any inappropriate personal attention (Welzenbach, 1986) which distresses the individual or interferes with activities (McKinney, 1990). Researchers have defined sexual harassment in terms of power and control (McKinney, 1990; Riger, 1991). Sexual harassment may be a form of intimidation used to maintain the status of individuals (McKinney, 1990). Sexual harassment can be described in terms of specific behaviors or can be so general as activities which the harassed perceives as offending behavior (McKinney, 1990). Labeling of sexual harassment was found to be a problem by Jaschik and Fretz (1991) who found that 30 percent of the participants, in their study of women's perceptions and labeling of sexual harassment, had experienced harassing behaviors but that only 10 percent of the experiences were labeled as sexual harassment.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Council (EEOC) guidelines define what constitutes sexual harassment. In general terms, sexual harassment includes any unwelcome sexual conduct which is a term or condition of employment or which has the effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work (Welzenbach, 1986; Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Lee and Heppner (1991) have grouped sexually harassing behaviors into five categories: materials (letters, phone calls, notes, objects), body language (offensive gestures, leering, ogling, standing too close), verbalizations (suggestive or otherwise offensive questions, comments, jokes), physical advances (deliberate touching), blackmail (threats or promises to gain compliance with a request).

Although sexual harassment has occurred throughout history, the term did not appear in the language until 1975. Since that time, researchers and authors have been giving increasing attention to the problem (Wishnietsky, 1991). Following the publication of the EEOC guidelines there has been an increase in research interest, congressional hearings, and litigation (Wishnietsky, 1991). Most of these research projects have centered on differences between males and females.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

The incidence of sexual harassment is difficult to assess because of the reluctance of victims to report the harassment in a formal manner. Petersen and Messengill (1982) reported that in a survey of 9000 females, 90 percent had experienced unwanted sexual attention at work. For civil service employees the incidence range from 19 percent (Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek, 1985) to 40 percent for federal workers (Riger, 1991). Researchers indicate sexual harassment on college campus situations as low as 20 percent (Dzeich and Weiner, 1984), one-third (Wishnietsky, 1991; Kenig and Ryan, 1986), and as high as 40 percent (Riger, 1991). Differences are found in the level of incidence of sexual harassment because individuals vary in what kinds of conduct they consider to be sexual harassment.

Although it is difficult to ascertain a precise level of sexual harassment when reported by a variety of researchers, the results of the U.S. Merit Protection Board, which conducted a comprehensive study of federal employees in 1980 and again in 1988, present a more consistent level of sexual harassment. The results of these studies indicated that 40 and 42 percent, respectively, of the women reported sexual harassment during the previous two year period (Riger, 1991).

Nature of Situations in which Sexual Harassment Occurs

Women have been the most frequent victims of sexual harassment and as the number of women in the workforce has increased the opportunity for sexual harassment to occur has increased (Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Women employed in situations in which they are significantly lower in power, status, or in a marginal position in the organization are more likely to be the victims of sexual harassment (Fain and Anderton, 1987; LaFontaine and Trudeau, 1986; Riger, 1991; and Robinson and Reid, 1985).

Younger women are more likely to be victims and are less likely to report harassment than are older female workers (Lott, et al, 1982; Reilly, et al, 1986). Lott (1982) concluded that younger women seem to have accepted that prowling men are a fact of life. Among college students, graduate students are more likely to encounter sexual harassment than are undergraduate students (Hotelling, 1991).

The philosophy of the organization in which the woman works impacts the prevalence of sexual harassment. Riger (1991) states that an environment which promotes equal opportunities for women is the most important factor in reducing sexual harassment. Companies with strong records for perceived equal employment opportunities report low levels of harassment (LaFontaine and Tredeau, 1986). Those workplaces which are perceived to be low in equity are the site of higher numbers of incidents of harassment (Riger, 1991).

Most victims of sexual harassment are females and most harassers are males (Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek, 1985). Most of the female victims are between the ages of 24 and 34, are in entry-level or trainee positions, and are lower in educational level. The harasser, by contrast, is male, older than the victim, of the same ethnic and social background, and likely to be the supervisor or superior of the victim (Petersen and Massengill, 1982).

Reporting of Sexual Harassment

Most incidents of sexual harassment are never reported through formal agents of social control (McKinney, 1990; Lee and Heppner, 1991). The conditions under which reporting in most likely to occur are those in which workers have been made aware of the company's policy on sexual harassment. Clearly stated policies, coupled with accessible and consistent grievance procedures are the first step in addressing sexual harassment (Howard, 1991). Companies with a clear, formal complaint procedure were reported to have dealt with significantly more complaints than those which do not have a formal procedure, 79% vs 29% (Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Among Fortune 500 companies responding to a survey 59 percent stated that they had a formal sexual harassment complaint procedure (Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Sixty-six percent of

colleges and universities were found to have formal complaint procedures in a 1984 study reported by Robertson (1988). Larger schools were more likely to have policies than were small private schools.

Reasons for not reporting sexual harassment tend to be that women are convinced that no meaningful consequences will result from the reporting and that they will suffer retaliation. Victims of sexual harassment believe that complaining will make their work situation unpleasant and that nothing constructive will be accomplished (Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Kanter (1977) states that because women generally hold less power in organizations than men, they feel that their complaints will not be taken seriously and they will suffer retaliation. Since dismissal and litigation are rarely used to redress sexual harassment, the victim must face the harasser. Thus, most victims of sexual harassment simply want the offending behavior to end (Riger, 1991). Sexual harassment has low risk for the harasser and the victim has little to gain by bringing a formal complaint (Riger, 1991). The most frequent response on the part of women is to ignore the harassment (Hotelling, 1991).

Sexual Harassment and Gender

Perception of what constitutes sexual harassment has been found to vary between males and females. Females generally have more negative attitudes, are less tolerant, see it as a more serious problem, and have broader definitions of sexual harassment than do males (McKinney, 1990; Mazer and Percival, 1989). Male executives (two-thirds) have been found to be much more likely to report that sexual harassment is greatly exaggerated than are female executives (less than one-third) (Petersen and Massengill, 1982).

Men and women differ sharply in what they consider to be sexual harassment. To men, the behavior is not offensive; and therefore, no crime has been committed and there is no problem to be solved (Riger, 1991). Women are more likely than men to consider teasing, looks, gestures, unnecessary physical contact, and remarks to be sexual harassment (Johnson, Stockdale, and Sall, 1991). Body language is considered significantly more offensive by women than by men (McKinney, 1990). Most males and females consider explicit sexual propositions, physical advances, and sexual bribery to be sexual harassment (Dunwoody-Miller and Gutek, 1985; Wishnietsky, 1991). Men are also more likely to ascribe the responsibility for the harassment to the female victim (Kenig and Ryan, 1986).

Ramifications of Sexual Harassment

In addition to the personal degradation women feel, women are discouraged from taking courses in which they fear harassment will occur, pursuing the types of careers in which harassment is permitted, and businesses suffer from nonproductive workers as a result of sexual harassment. Harassment has a more negative effect on the lives of women than on the lives of men (Mazer and Percival, 1989). The effects of sexual harassment can be devastating to the victims: alcoholism drug use, family disruption, psychosomatic illnesses, mental illness, work absenteeism, negative attitudes, depression, lack of motivation, nervousness, chronic fatigue, and lower self-confidence and self-esteem have all be cited as side effects of harassment (Welzenbach, 1986; Petersen and Massengill, 1982). Female employees report quitting their jobs or requesting transfers in order to avoid harassment (Riger, 1991).

For students the fear of sexual harassment can adversely affect the students ability to learn; they may refuse to take certain classes or to change their major because of the threat of harassment (Riger, 1991). Sexual harassment may impair the student's enjoyment of educational benefits, climate or opportunities as the student may deprive themselves of opportunities in the desire to avoid threatening situations (Underwood, 1987; Riger, 1991).

Sexual harassment is a problem for education, business, and industry. The threat of harassment prevents women from fully participating in educational situations and from freely pursuing career options. The extent of sexual harassment is difficult to ascertain because of the differences in the

perception of harassment for males and females and because of the reluctance of victims to report cases of sexual harassment. Educational institutions, business, and industry must develop a working climate which is free of sexual harassment in order for all to participate to the full extent of their ability and interests.

METHOD OF STUDY

The study was conducted to examine the relationship between perception of sexual harassment and selected demographic characteristics; and to determine the types of actions which are most likely to be considered to be sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has been considered to be a deterrent to women in the selection of male-oriented careers. The specific research questions were:

(1) What is the relationship between perception of sexual harassment and selected demographic characteristics (education level, race, family income)?
(2) What is the relationship between perception of sexual harassment and:
    - enrollment in nontraditional or traditional training programs
    - single parent status
    - gender
    - age
    - vocation
(3) What is the interest level in sexual harassment workshops?
(4) Do respondents feel they know what to do if sexually harassed?
(5) Would respondents report sexual harassment?
(6) Do respondents state that sexual harassment happens to females only?

Instrument Development

The Sexual Harassment Survey, developed by the researcher, was intended to measure the participant's feelings about sexual harassment by asking them to indicate whether ten different situations constituted sexual harassment. The situations included items concerning physical, verbal, auditory, social, and psychological dimensions of perceived sexual harassment. The ten dimensions were unwelcome touching, movements, conditional work assignments, job security, conditional pay or grade, work hour assignments, display of visually offensive materials, jokes, and comments concerning physical attributes.

For each of the ten situations the respondent was asked to carefully consider the situation and to indicate whether the situation constituted sexual harassment. The split-half reliability correlation coefficient for the ten items was .59, indicating a moderately high degree of reliability for the ten item instrument. The sum of the ten behaviors was considered to be a measurement of perception of sexual harassment.

In addition to situations which the participant considered to be sexual harassment, the respondent was asked whether they would like a sexual harassment workshop at their school, if they knew what to do if sexually harassed, whether they would report personal sexual harassment, and whether they thought sexual harassment happened only to females. These questions were considered as individual items measuring general interest in sexual harassment.

Sampling and Data Collection

The population of this study consisted of high school students and adults enrolled in traditional and nontraditional training projects and teachers in twelve school districts throughout New Jersey. One thousand twenty questionnaires were mailed to gender equity project directors. Of these 638 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 63 percent. The directors were asked to administer the questionnaire personally in group situations. They were asked specifically to not put the questionnaires in mail boxes or to administer them in unstructured situations.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data were examined by means of frequency and percentage distributions. Perception of sexual harassment was measured with ten statements to which the respondent was asked to indicate behaviors which did or did not constitute sexual harassment. The sum of the responses was the perception of sexual harassment score. Other questions were analysed individually. Analysis of variance was used to examine relationships between perception of sexual harassment and demographic characteristics of the sample. Chi square analysis was used to examine the relationships between the responses to the individual sexual harassment questions and the demographic characteristics.

FINDINGS

The results of the analysis of the findings are presented in three parts: (1) demographic information about the characteristics of the respondents; (2) test variable and research questions; and (3) the relationship between the test variables, perception of sexual harassment, and demographic characteristics. Demographic data is presented in Table 1 showing the frequency and percentage of the sample for each characteristic. The relationships between perception of sexual harassment and the demographic characteristics in contingency tables. Findings at the .05 level of significance were accepted as significant relationships and those at the .01 level as highly significant.

Characteristics of the Respondents

Thirty four percent of the sample was male while 66 percent was female. They varied in age from 13 years to over 20 years with the majority of the respondents, 45 percent, in the over 20 age group. The median age of the group was 18 years. The majority, 67 percent, of the participants classified their career as traditional for their gender. Most of the respondents were students, 51 percent, while the second largest group were teachers, 30 percent. Single parents constituted 28 percent of the sample. See Table 1 for the frequency and percentage of participants according to gender, age, career preparation, parental status, and vocational characteristics.

In terms of the respondents background, 41 percent were high school students, while 18 percent were high school graduates. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents reported being Caucasian; 21 percent were African American. Twenty-five percent of the group had family incomes of less than $20,000 annually while 37 percent reported family income of over $50,000 annually. See Table 1 for frequency and percentage of sample according to education level, race, and family income.

Table 1. Gender, age, career preparation, parental status, vocation, educational level, race, and family income characteristics of sample. n=683.

	f	%
Gender		
Male	196	34
Female	385	66
Age		
13 yrs	51	8
14 yrs	82	13
15 yrs	36	6
16 yrs	38	6
17 yrs	83	13
18 yrs	28	4
19 yrs	14	2
20 yrs	10	2
> 20 yrs	284	45
Career Preparation		
Traditional	389	67
Nontraditional	191	33
Parental Status		
Single Parents	171	28
Not Sing. Par.	442	72
Vocation		
Student	316	51
Teacher	184	30
Professional	34	5
Nonprofessional	15	2
College Student	51	8
Other	19	3
Education Level		
High School Student	253	41
High School Graduate	114	19
Technical School Student	48	8
Bachelor's Degree	70	11
Other	130	21
Race		
Caucasian	336	58
African American	122	21
Hispanic	43	7
Asian	24	4
Native American	20	3
Other	30	5
Family Income		
<$20,000	125	25
$21-30,000	78	15
$31-40,000	55	11
$41-50,000	59	12
$51-60,000	56	11
$61-70,000	27	5
$71-80,000	25	5
$81-90,000	24	5
>$90,000	55	11

Test Variables and Research Questions

The dependent variable, perception of sexual harassment, and the research questions were examined. Level of perception of sexual harassment was measured by a group of ten behaviors. The respondent was asked to indicate if each behavior consttituted sexual harassment. The percent who responded "yes" are indicated in contingency tables by demographic characteristics. The respondents were also asked to indicate "yes or no" to five research questions. Following are the frequency and percentage distributions of the number of respondents who answered "yes" to each of the research questions. See Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of respondents who answered research questions affirmatively. n=638

Research Questions:	f	%
• Would you like someone to present a workshop on sexual harassment to your school?	383	61
• Does your school have a sexual harassment policy?	380	61
• Do you know what to do if you are sexually harassed?	486	77
• Would you report sexual harassment if it happened to you?	449	72
• Does sexual harassment happen only to females?	78	87

Relationships between Test Variable and Respondent Characteristics

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Gender

Although analysis of variance indicated that males were found to be slightly lower in their perception of sexual harassment than females the relationship was not significant (F 2.413, p.1209). Chi-square analysis showed male and female respondents were similar in their views of behaviors which constitute sexual harassment with the exception of movements, bodily gestures, noises and comments about a person's physical attributes. Females were more likely to view this type of behavior as harassment than were males. All behaviors except jokes about sexual matters were seen by the majority, 50 per cent or more, of respondents as sexual harassment. Females generally reported broader definitions of sexual harassment than males. See Table 3.

Table 3. Percent of male and female respondents viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=571.

Behavior:	Males n=188	Females n=383	χ^2	p
Unwelcome touching	76	81	2.24	.1349
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	58	61	.57	.4491
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	77	85	5.03	.0250
Work assignment conditional on sexual favors	84	88	1.98	.1594
Job security conditional on sexual favors	87	90	1.14	.2855
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	89	90	.19	.6603
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	87	87	.00	.9746
Display of sexually offensive visual materials	63	67	1.01	.3144
Jokes about sexual matters	36	36	.02	.8776
Comments about person's physical attributes	46	54	2.91	.0883

Research Questions and Gender

Male and Female respondents were found to be significantly different in their answers to the research questions. Females were significantly more interested in having workshops in their schools than were males. Females were much more likely to know whether the school has a sexual harassment policy. In response to the question concerning their willingness to report sexual harassment if it happened to them personally, males were not nearly so likely to be willing to report

sexual harassment as females were. Although both males and females were in agreement that sexual harassment does not happen only to females, females were less likely to indicate an affirmative response. See Table 4.

Table 4. Percent of male and female respondents responding affirmatively to each of the research questions. n=571.

Question:	Male n=188	Female n=383	$\chi 2$	p
• Would you like someone to present a sexual harassment workshop to your school?	45	70	36.12	.0001
• Does your school have a sexual harassment policy?	53	64	6.38	.0115
• Do you know what to do if you are sexually harassed?	74	80	2.78	.0968
• Would you report sexual harassment if it happened to you?	64	82	21.83	.0001
• Does sexual harassment happen only to females?	15	8	7.74	.0054

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Age

Age was found to be highly significant as related to perception of sexual harassment (F 6.019, p.0001). Chi-square analysis by age groups indicated that the most perception of sexual harassment were those in the younger age groups. The 17-18 year old group were consistently less likely to consider verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances, job security, pay, display of sexually offensive visual materials, jokes, or comments about a person's physical attributes to be sexual harassment. The other age groups tended to be more similar in their attitudes about what kinds of behaviors constitued sexual harassment. See Table 5 and Graph 1 for the percent occuring in each age group.

Table 5. Percent of each age group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=615

Behavior:	13-14 n=123	15-16 n=74	17-18 n=111	>18 n=307	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	80	85	73	79	4.24	.2365
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	64	58	41	66	22.72	.0001
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	81	88	76	83	4.24	.2371
Work assignment cond. on sexual favors	83	88	81	90	6.80	.0785
Job security conditional on sexual favors	88	86	83	92	7.52	.0570
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	89	88	82	93	12.43	.0061
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	87	92	79	89	8.26	.0410
Display of sexually offensive visual materials	75	66	48	68	21.99	.0001
Jokes about sexual matters	56	36	17	34	41.13	.0001
Comments about physical attributes	60	61	32	53	23.22	.0001

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Education

Analysis of variance indicated that level of education was significantly (F 2.464, p.0441) related to perception of sexual harassment. Chi square analysis of the educational groups indicated that those who held Bachelor's degrees exhibited the highest levels of sexual harassment perception. The group showing the lowest level of sensitivity were high school students. Students were much less likely to state that verbal or auditory behaviors were sexual harassment than the other groups. Vocational technical students were less likely to be offended by visual materials. No other significant differences were found between perception of sexual harassment and education level. See Table 6 and Graph 2.

Table 6. Percent of each level of education group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=610

Behavior:	Stud. n=250	HS n=113	VTS n=48	Bach n=70	Other n=129	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	82	73	77	83	78	4.61	.3293
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	51	62	63	71	71	19.99	.0005
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	81	78	79	71	71	5.81	.2135
Work assignment cond. on sexual favors	84	87	88	96	88	6.97	.1376
Job security conditional on sexual favors	86	89	90	93	91	4.46	.3479
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	88	89	88	94	94	5.54	.2358
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	83	87	83	93	91	7.66	.1048
Display of sexually off. visual materials	60	67	60	71	75	9.88	.0425
Jokes about sexual matters	36	33	44	40	33	2.49	.6468
Comments about physical attributes	49	51	58	57	50	2.50	.6453

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Parental Status

Analysis of variance indicated a significant relationship between perception of sexual harassment and parental status (F 13.421, p.0001). Chi-square analysis of the various parental status groups indicated that respondents who described themselves as parents were the most perceptive of sexual harassment while respondents who classified themselves as step parents were the least perceptive. The researcher had some concern that some of the students may have been describing their own family situation rather than their parental status. Therefore, the results of this question may not be reliable. See Table 7.

Table 7. Percent of each parental status group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=616

Behavior:	not n=263	parent n=323	step n=7	foster n=6	other n=17	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	77	82	67	43	67	9.94	.0414
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	45	72	43	71	61	42.91	.0001
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	76	88	57	100	75	17.54	.0015
Work assignment cond. on sexual favors	84	91	57	83	69	16.43	.0025
Job security conditional on sexual favors	85	93	71	100	69	18.72	.0009
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	89	93	71	71	75	13.03	.0112
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	85	90	86	100	59	16.69	.0022
Display of sexually off. visual materials	54	76	57	67	61	31.78	.0001
Jokes about sexual matters	20	49	29	43	47	51.99	.0001
Comments about physical attributes	39	63	29	17	29	39.39	.0001

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Marital Status

Analysis of variance examining the relationship between perception of sexual harassment and marital status indicated that they were significantly related (F3.648, p.0029). Chi-square analysis of respondents who described themselves as divorced or widowed were the most perceptive of sexual harassment while the least perceptive were those who were single. Again, the researcher had some concern that some of the students may have been describing their own family situation rather than their marital status. Therefore, the results of this question may not be reliable. See Table 8.

Table 8. Percent of each marital group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=615

Behavior:	sing n=336	mar n=202	sep n=16	div n=35	wid n=17	other n=9	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	79	77	69	83	79	78	1.67	.8932
Verbal or auditory sexual advances	56	65	63	69	59	44	7.12	.2116
Move., bodily gestures, or noises	82	82	88	86	88	56	5.38	.3708
Work ass. cond. on sexual favors	87	87	88	94	82	56	9.45	.0923
Job sec. cond. on sexual favors	87	91	88	91	88	67	5.55	.3521
Pay or grades cond. on sex. favors	91	89	88	89	94	78	2.84	.7242
Work hours cond.on sexual favors	87	88	81	94	83	67	5.99	.3076
Display of sex.offensive visual mat.	62	69	69	71	94	56	10.81	.0552
Jokes about sexual matters	34	35	38	44	67	22	9.60	.0874
Comments about physical attributes	49	52	69	71	59	11	14.91	.0108

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Single Parent Status

Single Parents were found to be significantly more perceptive of sexual harassment that those who were not single parents (F 32.33, p.0001). Chi square analysis of the separate sexual harassment behaviors indicated that those who were single parents were considerably more likely to consider verbal remarks, movement and bodily gestures, work assignments, display of offensive visual

materials, jokes, and comments about physical attributes than those who were not single parents. See Table 9 and Graph 3.

Table 9. Percent of single parent and those who are not single parents viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=604.

Behavior:	SP n=166	not-SP n=438	χ^2	p
Unwelcome touching	81	78	.76	.3826
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	74	55	17.57	.0001
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	90	79	9.74	.0018
Work assignment conditional on sexual favors	91	85	4.10	.0429
Job security conditional on sexual favors	92	87	2.94	.0862
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	92	89	1.52	.2180
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	90	86	1.53	.2167
Display of sexually offensive visual materials	78	61	15.67	.0001
Jokes about sexual matters	58	28	48.13	.0001
Comments about person's physical attributes	69	45	29.27	.0001

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Career

Analysis of variance indicated that students who were enrolled in career preparation programs which were traditional for their gender were significantly (F 11.731, p.0007) more perceptive of sexual harassment than those who were enrolled in nontraditional career programs. Students enrolled in traditional programs were particularly perceptive to verbal remarks, movements, work assignments, job security, pay or grades, work hours, and display of visually offensive materials. See Table 10 and Graph 4.

Table 10. Percent of each career preparation group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=572

Behavior:	Trad n=386	non-Trad n=186	χ^2	p
Unwelcome touching	81	77	1.37	.2412
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	64	50	10.54	.0012
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	87	73	18.44	.0001
Work assignment conditional on sexual favors	90	83	5.39	.0203
Job security conditional on sexual favors	92	83	11.62	.0007
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	94	81	25.27	.0001
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	91	80	13.42	.0002
Display of sexually offensive visual materials	69	59	5.91	.0151
Jokes about sexual matters	38	32	2.50	.1137
Comments about person's physical attributes	53	46	2.44	.1182

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Race

Analysis of variance indicated that race was not generally found to be significantly related to perception of sexual harassment (F 2.123, p.0612). Caucasian and Hispanic groups were found to be the most perceptive and were significantly more perceptive of sexual harassment than respondents who categorized their racial background as Other. Chi square analysis of the relationship between specific behaviors and whether the respondent felt the behavior was sexual harassment revealed that perception of the behavior and race were related for some of the situations. Caucasians were more likely to consider the behavior to be harassment than any other racial group for all behaviors except display of visual materials, jokes about sexual matters, and comments about physical attributes. Native Americans exhibited a sensitivity to displays of visual materials which were sexually offensive while Hispanics were most sensitive to jokes about sexual matters and comments about a person's physical attributes. Hispanic and Asian females were found to be more perceptive of sexual harassment than males. African American and Native American males and females were found to be similar in their level of sensitivity to sexual harassment. See Table 11.

Table 11. Percent of each racial group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=564

Behavior:	Ca n=334	AA n=116	Hi n=42	As n=23	NA n=19	Other n=30	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	81	78	81	61	79	80	5.61	.3463
Verb.or auditory sexual advances	65	61	55	43	40	43	13.55	.0187
Move., bodily gestures, or noises	85	79	83	83	63	73	9.17	.1024
Work ass.cond.on sexual favors	92	81	86	79	84	73	17.17	.0042
Job security cond.on sexual favors	93	83	88	84	89	73	20.55	.0001
Pay or grades cond.on sex.favors	95	84	90	79	85	77	25.48	.0001
Work hours cond.on sexual favors	92	80	81	75	90	80	17.43	.0001
Display of sex.off.visual materials	66	66	62	63	74	70	1.19	.9462
Jokes about sexual matters	34	43	55	38	25	20	13.91	.0162
Comments about physical attributes	51	51	71	58	42	40	9.51	.0902

Ca Caucasian AA African American Hi Hispanic
As Asian NA Native American

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Family Income

Analysis of variance indicated that family income level was significantly related to perception of sexual harassment (F 2.221, p.0248). Chi-square analysis indicated that the highest levels of perception were found among those who reported family incomes of less than $20,000. The least perceptive groups was those who reported family incomes of $21-40,000. See Table 12.

Table 12. Percent of each income group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=501

Behavior:	Income (1000s) <20 n=125	21-40 n=132	41-60 n=113	61-80 n=52	>80 n=79	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	84	75	79	79	84	4.01	.4042
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	74	51	57	52	70	19.67	.0006
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	82	81	83	85	85	.61	.9622
Work assig.conditional on sexual favors	92	77	88	90	92	16.36	.0026
Job security conditional on sexual favors	90	83	91	90	92	6.96	.1378
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	95	85	90	92	92	8.75	.0678
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	89	80	84	94	95	14.14	.0069
Display of sexually off. visual materials	77	56	69	71	67	13.79	.0080
Jokes about sexual matters	56	29	31	27	28	30.53	.0001
Comments about physical attributes	64	49	45	48	53	10.19	.0374

Perception of Sexual Harassment and Vocation

Analysis of variance indicated that vocation was significantly related to perception of sexual harassment (F 3.525, p.0038). Chi-sqaure analysis indicated that respondents who classified themselves as professionals were most perceptive of sexual harassment while those who were nonprofessional were least sensitive. Teachers were particularily sensitive to verbal remarks. Those who classified themselves as professional were sensitive to job security, pay, work hours, and display of visually offensive materials. See Table 13.

Table 13. Percent of each vocation group viewing behavior as sexual harassment. n=613

Behavior:	Stu. n=314	Tea. n=183	Prof. n=34	non-Prof. n=15	other n=16	$\chi 2$	p
Unwelcome touching	84	76	79	73	72	7.68	.1748
Verbal remarks or auditory sexual advances	53	70	62	67	56	16.57	.0054
Movement, bodily gestures, or noises	80	87	85	73	76	6.94	.2248
Work assignment cond.on sexual favors	86	89	94	80	81	4.98	.4180
Job security conditional on sexual favors	86	93	97	67	94	15.42	.0087
Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors	88	93	97	73	83	11.82	.0373
Work hours conditional on sexual favors	84	92	97	67	82	16.09	.0066
Display of sexually off.visual materials	63	72	85	53	67	18.33	.0026
Jokes about sexual matters	36	40	47	20	56	16.71	.0051
Comments about physical attributes	53	53	65	40	41	6.31	.2274

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Results of a study to examine the kinds of behavior which were considered to be sexual harassment as related to gender, parental status, enrollment in nontraditional training programs, age, and vocations, indicated that participants vary widely in thekinds of actions which are

considered to be sexual harassment. The gender of the respondent was found to be significantly related to perception of sexual harassment in general. However, verbal and auditory forms of harassment were more likely to be considered to be harassment by females than by males. Females were generally more sensitive to sexual harassment than males on all of the selected behaviors with the exception of comments about a person's physical attributes. Males were not likely to consider these types of comments to be harassment while females did consider them to be sexual harassment. The findings of the study as related to gender support the general findings summarized in the review of literature that females are more sensitive to sexual harassment and that they find a wider variety of behaviors offensive than do males. (McKinney, 1990).

For both males and females the most offensive types of sexual harassment were those in which job security, compensation, or work assignments were conditional on sexual favors. For these types of harassment both males and females were in agreement that this behavior was sexual harassment. Neither males not females in this study were offended by jokes about sexual matters.

In addition to being more perceptive of behaviors which could be considered to be sexual harassment, females were found to be significantly more interested in workshops about sexual harassment. Research has shown that females are more likely to report sexual harassment in situations in which there is a clear policy about sexual harassment and a procedure for resolving the problem. Some researchers have indicated an interest on the part of females to learn empowering strategies which can help them in coping with sexual harassment (Howard, 1991; Peterson and Massengill, 1982).

Age was found to be significantly related to perception of sexual harassment. Surveys about the prevalence of sexual harassment have indicated that it occurs most frequently with younger women but that older women are more likely to report it. Women may develop confidence in their ability to cope with sexual harassment as they mature coupled with the fact that as they develop more security they are more willing to seek redress for harassment (Lott, et al, 1982; Reilly, et al, 1986).

Students who were enrolled in traditional career programs were significantly more sensitive to sexual harassment than those in nontraditional programs. Workers who are minorities, are young, and are not in positions of power are the most likely to be harassed (Peterson and Massengill, 1982). Perhaps students enrolled in nontraditional programs accept the prospect of sexual harassment as a part of their career choice or they feel that they are able to handle any harassment which occurs. The reasons for this response are not clear.

Race was examined as related to perception of sexual harassment. The racial groups which exhibited the most sensitivity to sexual harassment were Caucasians and Hispanic groups. These may be groups which feel least comfortable about their ability to cope with a sexually harassing situation. Again, the reasons for their response was not clear. Lee and Heppner (1991) indicated that the role of ethnicity in sexual harassment has not previously been examined and needs to be studied.

The study of sexual harassment is important in preventing harassing behavior by helping males and females to understand the type of behaviors which are found to be objectionable, to develop procedures for the satisfactory solution of problems so that work places are productive both for the actualization of the individual and the success of the business or industry, and to increase understanding of the individuals at greatest risk for engaging in, condoning, or experiencing sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a deterrent to the success of both men and women in school and in the workplace. Strategies to prevent or eliminate these harassing behaviors need to be developed.

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Participating School Districts: Bayonne Public Schools, Essex County Vocational Technical School, Gloucester County Vocational Technical School, Irvington Public Schools, Mercer County Vocational Technical School, Middlesex County Vocational Technical School, Monmouth County Vocational Technical School, Paramus Public Schools, Pinelands Regional School District, and Salem County Vocational Technical School.

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Sexual Harassment Survey

The following questions concern your knowledge of sexual harassment. Your individual answers will be treated as confidential information and no attempt will be made to identify you personally. Thank you for your cooperation.

PLEASE NO NOT WRITE IN THE GREEN SECTION OF THE ANSWER SHEET. You do not need to include your name.

Ex. Think about Situation A.
1. Do you consider it to be Sexual Harassment? If yes, mark 1; if no, mark 2.

A. Unwelcome touching between workers or students.
1. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

B. Verbal remarks or auditory (noise, whistling, or other sounds) sexual advances.
2. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

C. Movements, bodily gestures, or notes of a sexual nature which makes it difficult to work or study.
3. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

D. Work assignments conditional on sexual favors.
4. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

E. Job security conditional on sexual favors.
5. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

F. Pay or grades conditional on sexual favors.
6. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

G. Work hours or assignments conditional on sexual favors.
7. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

H. Display of visual materials which are sexually offensive.
8. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

I. Jokes about sexual matters.
9. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

J. Comments about a person's physical attributes.
10. Do you consider this to be Sexual Harassment ? 1. yes 2. no

11. Would you like someone to present a workshop on Sexual Harassment to your school? 1. yes 2. no

12. Does your school have a Sexual Harassment policy? 1. yes 2. no

13. Do you know what to do if you are Sexually Harassed? 1. yes 2. no

14. Would you report Sexual Harassment if it happened to you? 1. yes 2. no

15. Does Sexual Harassment happen only to females? 1. yes 2. no

16. Please indicate your gender
    1. male
    2. female

17. Age
    1. 13 years
    2. 14 years
    3. 15 years
    4. 16 years
    5. 17 years
    6. 18 years
    7. 19 years
    8. 20 years
    9. over 20 years

18. Are you a _____
    1. student
    2. teacher
    3. professional other than teacher
    4. non professional
    5. other
    6. college student

19. What is the Highest Level of Education you have completed?
    1. high school student
    2. high school graduate
    3. Technical Certification
    4. Bachelors Degree
    5. other

20. What is your Parental Status?
    1. not a parent
    2. parent
    3. step parent
    4. foster parent
    5. other

21. What is your Marital Status
    1. single
    2. married
    3. separated
    4. divorced
    5. widowed
    6. other

22. Is your job or career interest considered by others to be traditional or nontraditional for your gender? ex. traditional: male plumber, female nurse
    nontraditional: female plumber, male nurse

    1. traditional for my gender
    2. nontraditional for my gender

23. With which of the following groups do you most closely identify? (Please select only one)

1. Caucasian, not Hispanic
2. African-American
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Native American
6. other

24. Which category best describes your annual family income?

1. under $21,000
2. $21-30,000
3. $31-40,000
4. $41-50,000
5. $51-60,000
6. $61-70,000
7. $71-80,000
8. $81-90,000
9. over $90,000

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APPENDIX

SENSITIVITY TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND AGE

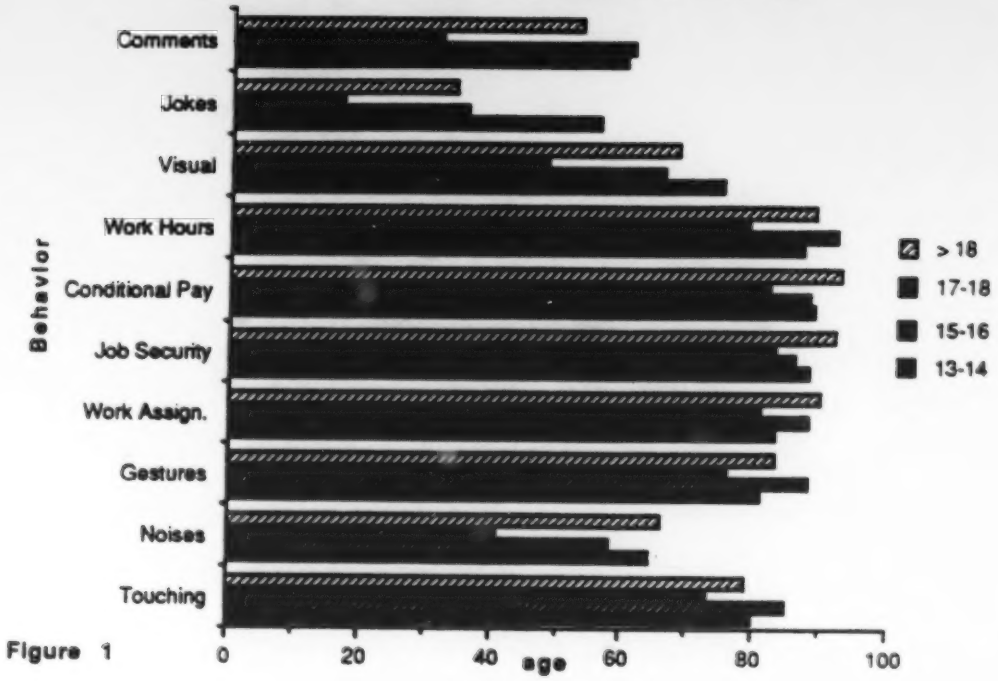

Figure 1

SENSITIVITY TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND EDUCATION

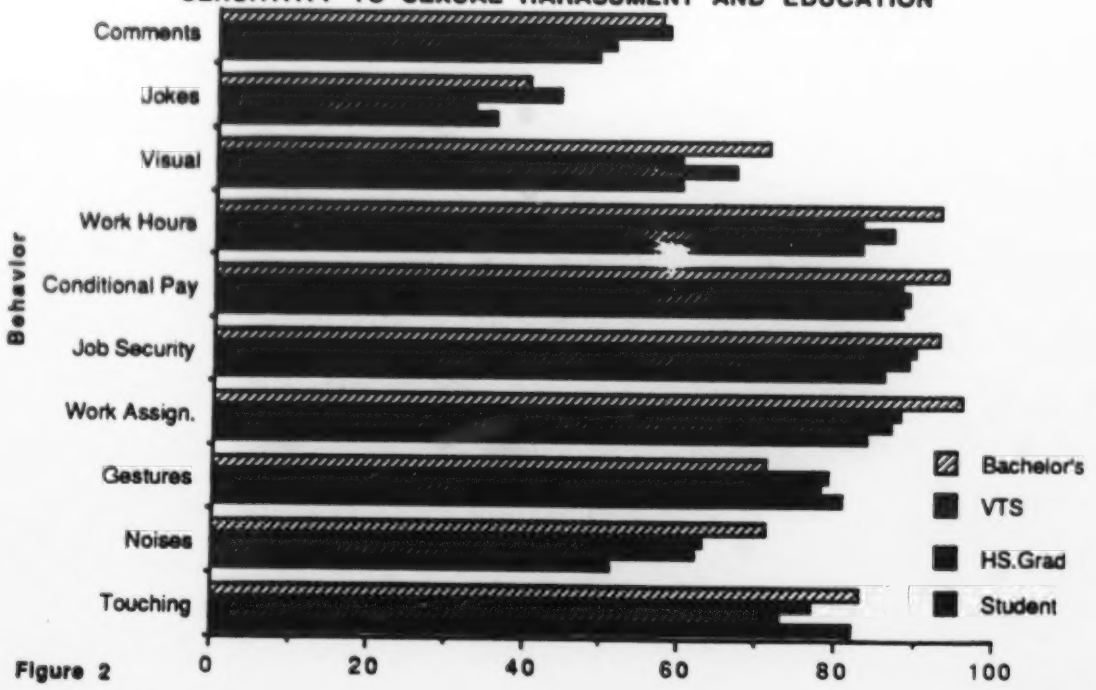

Figure 2

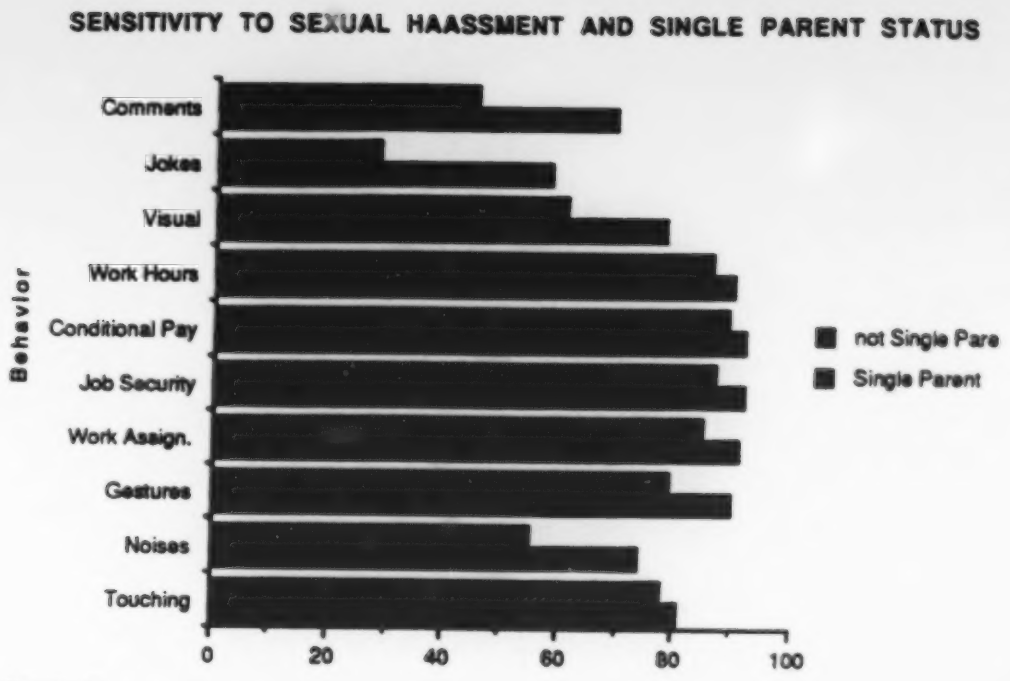

Figure 3

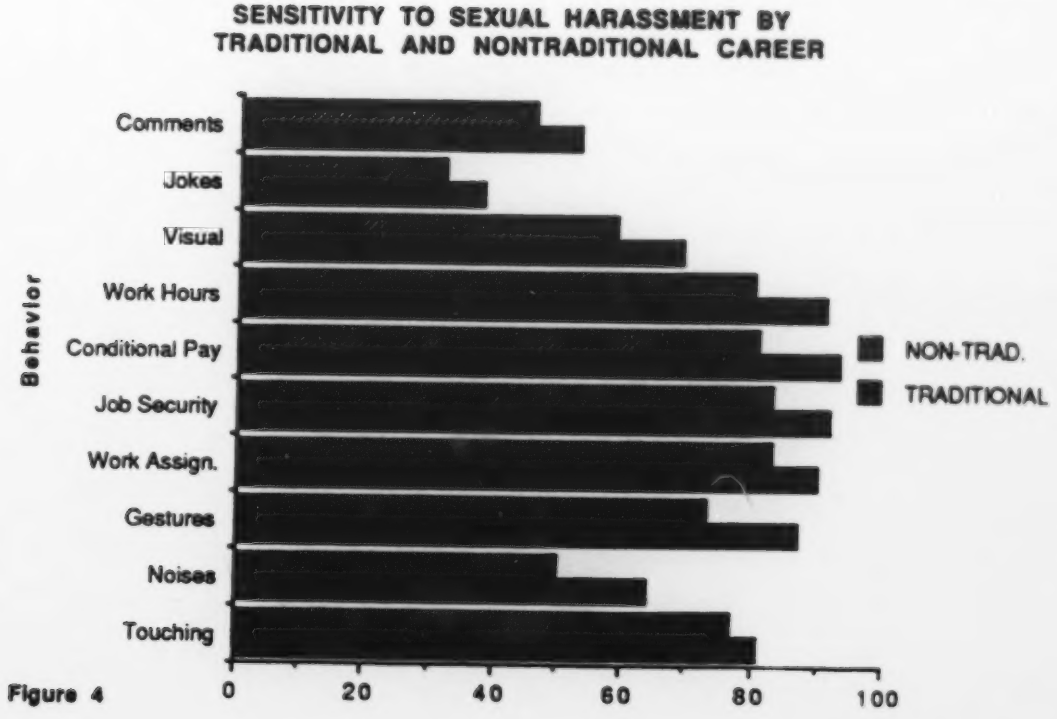

Figure 4

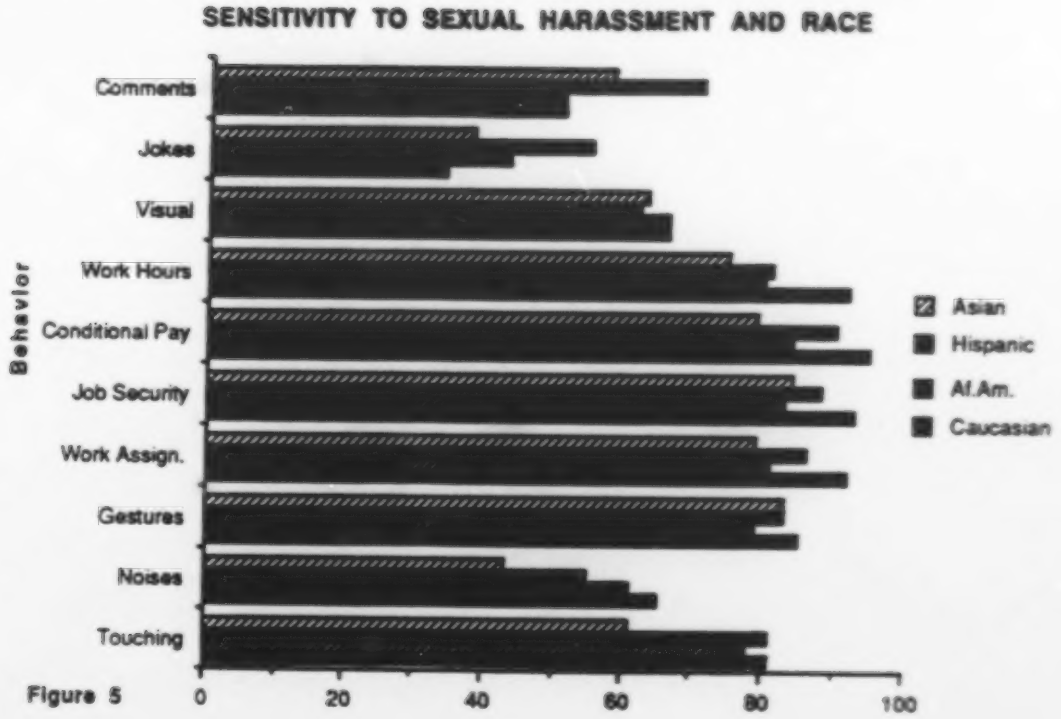
SENSITIVITY TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND RACE
Behavior
Comments
Jokes
Visual
Work Hours
Conditional Pay
Job Security
Work Assign.
Gestures
Noises
Touching
0
20
40
60
80
100
Asian
Hispanic
Af.Am.
Caucasian

Figure 5